

KAZUO OHNO

the butterfly dream

Text | KATIE KINGSBERRY PALMER



“ONCE UPON A
TIME, CHUANG TZU
DREAMED THAT HE WAS
A BUTTERFLY, FLYING
ABOUT ENJOYING ITSELF.
IT DID NOT KNOW THAT
IT WAS CHUANG TZU.
SUDDENLY HE AWOKE,
AND VERITABLY WAS
CHUANG TZU AGAIN. HE
DID NOT KNOW WHETHER
IT WAS CHUANG TZU
DREAMING THAT HE
WAS A BUTTERFLY, OR
WHETHER IT WAS THE
BUTTERFLY DREAMING
THAT IT WAS CHUANG
TZU.”

-the famous Chinese philosopher
CHUANG TZU

Kazuo Ohno was a man who brought art to life through dance. The legendary dancer performed the Japanese style of dance called Butoh. Developed in Japan after World War II, Ankoku Butoh translates to “the dance of utter darkness.” Named appropriately, audiences are led through the black depths of human experience, life and death. The raw nature of Butoh is inspired by the experience of living through Hiroshima.

Ohno's dance style was poetic. You can feel the story before you understand it. He transformed himself to evoke an emotion from the audience; transcending the boundaries of human experience to implant his memories into the minds of the viewers, thereby creating a collective experience. One of his earliest works, “Jellyfish Dance,” relates his experience watching jellyfish swimming in water that had become a tomb for soldiers who had died from hunger and disease. Like the dance style itself, the scene is grotesquely beautiful - both morbid and hopeful.

Ohno had a typical Butoh dancer body - emaciated and wrinkled, moving through contortions. The aesthetic manages to find beauty where it does not appear to exist. The relationship between life and death is portrayed as complementary, cyclical, and codependent. There is no light without darkness. Similarly, Butoh can move an audience to bursts of laughter just as easily as bursts of tears. Learning how to perform so masterfully took years of dedication and practice. It also required a spark to ignite his passion for dance. This spark came in the form of La Argentina.

Ohno was born October 27, 1906 in Hakodate, Hokkaido. He was a great athlete and was enrolled at the Japan Athletic College. During these years, he was taken to see Antonia Merce perform. Merce was a famous Spanish dancer known as La Argentina, and she captivated Ohno. It was this chance opportunity that sparked Ohno's infatuation with dance. He would later compose “Admiring La Argentina” - which was inspired by Merce and widely

regarded as one of Ohno's best works.

After graduation, Ohno went on to teach dance at a high school in Yokohama. He began training in Japanese modern dance with Baku Ishii and Takaya Eguchi before being drafted in 1938 into the Japanese Army. Ohno was distinctly changed by his experiences during the war. He was taken as a prisoner of war in New Guinea for one year of his nine years of service. He saw firsthand the depth of human depravity, and the resilience of the human soul.

Ohno's first performance wasn't until 1949, when he was 43 years old. After witnessing Ohno's performance, Tatsumi Hijikata (the father of Butoh) asked him to join his dance collective, forming a long and creatively prosperous partnership. He rose to great acclaim, performing internationally and even appearing in a few films. A few of his most famous pieces were “Water Lilies,” “My Mother,” and “The Road in Heaven, the Road in Earth.” After losing the ability to walk, Ohno performed using only his hands, or crawling. He never lost the ability to transcend his human form to communicate with audiences. He continued to perform through his 100th year, eventually passing away at the age of 103.

Ohno will be remembered for leading audiences through an emotional journey with masterful precision. Most often taking on the role of a woman, Ohno coaxed laughs out of the audience with cartoon-ish makeup, floppy shoes, and a wig that wouldn't stay put. If he were portraying a bird, he could imagine the feeling of wind coursing through his feathers, which would inspire his movements. Achieving freedom of mind and body allowed him to mimic the movements of any being by transforming into them. To tell the life story of Kazuo Ohno is to describe the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a magnificent butterfly.



hugely influential on me – that story of someone trying to write their way out of a hell of their own creation. So I contacted Cronenberg. He saw that I was looking for some way to pull myself out of real despondency. If someone asked me today to do it, now I have a happy marriage and a kid, I don't know if I could. But back then it was cathartic. I had something to say about the story. And it wasn't about the chemicals, though I knew all about that, too. The story is about the struggle not to die – and how art can save you.

Commercially, at least, your breakthrough role in movies was playing Robocop with Paul Verhoeven. How did that shape you?

I had a cathartic moment with Verhoeven this year during the twenty-fifth anniversary of Robocop. Back then, we went through our own little shit-fits. But that guy really runs and guns. He was immersed in medieval history, myth – truly gifted. And so prescient. The film was an unbelievable critique of the ideology of the 1980s – privatization, the trickle-down theory of economics...

But that's perhaps not the main reason why it still stands up today...

No, I agree. The theme is resurrection. Verhoeven transformed the script. I remember sitting in a suite hearing him explain how the film was ostensibly about progress – about a society taking away the life of someone in the name of progress. But what they cannot take is his humanity, his immaterial soul. Hence Robocop's dreams.

How much of your portrayal of Murphy/Robocop was driven by Verhoeven's vision?

All of it. After all the vocal training, all that physical transformation of my person, all the make-up in the morning for the face (six and a half hours – the longest facial prosthetic in cinema history), I understood what it meant for me in that scene in the film to go back into the family home, take off my helmet and speak in Murphy's normal voice – a softer, less robotic voice – because of what Verhoeven had told me.

What happened next?

I was depressed for five months, so I got the fuck out, ended up in Madrid, and followed the flamenco circuit. It turned into a great summer.

Mighty Aphrodite with Woody Allen (another jazz musician) must have been somewhat different...

Oh, phenomenal fun. Actually, I was shooting Beyond the Clouds at the same time with Antonioni, so I went back and forth. Woody was a huge fan of Antonioni – how could you not be? – and I knew him before, anyway. Between the two of them, I learnt so much. But here's the deal with Woody: he doesn't think of himself as an actor's director. He worries that he doesn't have the right language anyway. And he'd been stuck with actors over-intellectualizing every whole damn scene before. I was like that when I was young. Now I just want someone to tell me if I'm wrong. And that's what Woody does perfectly. He gets out of the way.

How does thinking in terms of the musicality of a performance help with a really long role, like your portrayal of Burroughs in Naked Lunch? How did you pace the work out? Did you score it in advance?

When I direct, I do block it out. It's all music. For Partners, I scored the whole thing. The great Swiss actress and beauty Irene Jacob came up to me once and said, "that Miles Davis you were using in the film – you were choreographing the scenes to the music, weren't you?" She saw it exactly. But in Naked Lunch, the moments where I knew I was in

deep shit if I was working with anything other than the material right in front of me was in any scene I was working with Judy Davis. With her, you just act. Because she comes at you with all guns blazing. I just had to zone in on her and go with whatever she was throwing. She has such a repertoire of emotional music. Nothing I could come up with could match the sheer power of that woman. So I just threw the car into neutral. I would block out my ideas in a very orchestrated way with Cronenberg, who is very choreographed in his approach. But with Judy you were just rockin' and rollin. And she's so sexy. I mean, she's not my thing at all, but she sat on my lap and put a kiss on me the first day we were working that almost made me go to confession. I mean, I was gone.

You've just made my already very ordinary life feel a little less bearable, Peter.

Ha, ha! That reminds me of something my dear friend Gore Vidal would say: "Whenever I hear of the success of one of my friends, a little something in me dies."

Before you go, can I ask about your work in The New Age (1994)? The writer and director Michael Tolkin had obviously hit the big time with his screenplay for Altman's The Player a couple of years earlier, so in some ways, it's got a bit lost in our memory. But it is such a cool film, a kind of gem. And its debts to Antonioni are obvious.

Of course! Michael Tolkin is an Antonioni nut. I think it is a brilliant movie – about LA. Michael wanted to capture a yuppie LA teetering on the edge of moral collapse in the greedy Eighties. And he succeeded, in my view.

I'm glad you talk so warmly of it. When you think back on your work, what is the stuff that you are most proud of? Is The New Age in there?

Definitely. And again, it's because I had something to say at that point – about the guy I was playing. I was really over-extended in my personal life then. I was seeing far too many women at once, jetting off to Paris, running around fashion parties for Armani and Versace. Overstepping the mark in lots of ways. So it was territory I knew.

Again, you were sparring in the film with Judy Davis...

Right. In fact, Judy turned to me when we were sitting on a rock in the Joshua Tree as we were getting ready to shoot the desert scene at the end, and said – as only Judy would – "Yes, I think that you and I, Weller, have become the Astaire and Rogers of the 1990s dysfunctional relationship."

For that, she gets the last word. Very many thanks, Peter.

It's a pleasure.

PETER WELLER

acting & all that jazz

PETER WELLER PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDI ELLOWAY

THERE'S A BRIEF BAR
SCENE IN ONE OF
THE STORY LINES RUNNING
THROUGH THE FIFTH
SEASON OF SHOWTIME'S
HIT SERIES DEXTER IN
WHICH THE PEDIGREE OF
PETER WELLER AS AN ACTOR
MAKES ITS PRESENCE
QUIETLY BUT FIRMLY FELT

TEXT | PETER STACEY

quietly but firmly felt. An alumnus of the Actor's Studio and a protégé of Uta Hagen, Weller earned his spurs walking the boards of New York theatres for directors like Otto Preminger and Mike Nichols well before his movie career took off in the 1980s. He appeared in the films of Sidney Lumet (Just Tell Me What You Want) Alan Parker (Shoot the Moon), Michael Apted (Firstborn), Paul Verhoeven (Robocop), Woody Allen (Mighty Aphrodite), Michelangelo Antonioni (Beyond the Clouds) and, as the 90s began, in David Cronenberg's Naked Lunch. Weller still works for the big screen – he is starring in J.J. Abrams' forthcoming Star Trek Into Darkness (the identity of his character is currently a closely guarded secret) – but these days he spends more time in television, both in front of the camera (24, Monk, Fringe, Psych) and behind it (House, Sons of Anarchy. Weller is a distinguished director, nominated for an Oscar for his short film Partners in 1993), while somehow finding time to finish a PhD at UCLA in Renaissance art history. An inspired piece of casting brought him into Dexter to play Stan Liddy, a dirty narcotics cop looking for payback after being shaken down in a surveillance operation by Miami Metro, where the serial-killing eponymous antihero of the show has a daytime job in forensics as a blood spatter-pattern analyst ("I'm the blood guy", as Dexter himself archly puts it).

In lesser hands, the character of the small-time cocaine cowboy Liddy could easily have remained cartoonish. It's often remarked that he's given some of the best one-liners in the history of the series, and Weller clearly has a great deal of fun delivering them. In one of his earliest scenes, we find Liddy cooling his heels in a dive bar shortly after his bust, drinking down his irritation and plotting revenge in the company of another disaffected cop from homicide whose suspicions about the night-time activities of their mutual colleague in forensics are growing. As they trade information while knocking back tequila, Liddy comes to learn of Dexter's existence and of the possibility that he might represent a chink in Miami Metro's moral armor. His reaction

“MY FIRST LOVE WAS ALWAYS JAZZ AND THE TRUMPET...

to the news is absolutely spot-on: “Dexter? What the fuck kind of name is Dexter?”

This is not a rhetorical question. It's a pivotal moment, as the creators ask the viewers to reflect for a moment on the very title of the show, which slyly exploits the original Latin meaning of the killer's name in order to yield the dramatic conceit at the heart of the whole series: Dexter is, in fact, really sinister. And it is Weller who manages to slow down the scene and get us to concentrate on the dialogue so that we can savor the irony of a line which might otherwise have been so easily lost in banal bar-room banter. He does so through a variety of means. For a start, there's the use of his extraordinary voice – low, sonorous, and shot through with a metallic tone which Weller manipulates sometimes to give his diction a mechanic bark, sometimes to stretch cadences. Then there's his deconstruction of the act of slamming tequila. Liddy doesn't take his slice of lime and suck on it; in a sudden glimpse of tightly focused violence, we see him savagely tearing it apart, all flashing teeth and malice. He doesn't lick a line of salt; he lifts the entire shaker and taps it twice into his mouth with a disciplined touch of his finger. He doesn't bothering asking the barman for another shot because he has the bottle right by him. And perhaps most importantly of all, he's not sitting but standing -- his jarring, staccato movements between the glass and the bar marshaling an irritable, alcoholic edginess into some sort of order and purpose. Idolize sent Peter Stacey to find Weller in his Beverly Hills club and ask him how he comes up with this stuff...

Peter, can you single out any early experiences which stood you in good stead for a career in acting? When did it all begin for you?

Actually, my first love was always jazz and the trumpet. My mother was a piano player. I grew up with it. Almost all my heroes – my real heroes – are musicians. When I hear Coltrane, or Miles Davis, or Duke Ellington, or Count Basie, I tell you, man... and a lot of that stuff I heard before I even picked up a trumpet myself. But here's what happened. Christopher Plummer, who was a classically trained pianist, talks about having had a sudden realization that he was not actually going to be Horowitz. That's how it was for me. I'm twenty years old, on a bandstand in one of the leading contemporary music schools in the country, the University of North Texas, with all these genius guys – all major players in the music business now – and I suddenly get it: I'm not going to be Miles Davis. At that point, there was a little bit of desperation. What do I do now? I do the only other thing I know how to do, which is acting. I had acted for fun as a kid. I was lucky because this genius called Robert Jani, who worked for Walt Disney – the P.T. Barnum of Disney in the Fifties, in a way – had been drafted and was stationed with my father, who was an army pilot. He heard me sing, said I was great (though I didn't pay it any mind back then) and kept putting me on stage in these little theatre productions. So I now shifted into drama. A wonderful acting teacher told me I had some talent. So that was it. I remember vividly the first time I said, “I'm an actor”. Someone asked me what I did, and it just came out. So that was the declaration. Then I had to own it.

Did it ever strike you back then as cool or interesting or to become other people on stage as a way of life?

Well, that whole Camus thing about the actor in The Myth of Sisyphus – that the actor is essentially baseless, travelling

and trafficking in the realm of the ephemeral, projecting himself absolutely into the lives of others, getting to see how fleeting everything is – that did become huge for me later. Oh yeah. I realized how important they were during an improvisation in 1978 with Elia Kazan. Kazan had inducted me into the Actors' Studio (though Uta Hagen was my real mentor). He was as gifted a guy as you ever met – real quick, feisty – and he said, “OK, Weller, what's the key moment when you became an adult?” I blurted straight out: “When my father let me go to London with my friend Jeffrey Hofstetter when I was fifteen.” He shoots back: “Do you miss Jeffrey?” And I did, man. I almost started crying. That was Kazan. He could just pin you down.

How did you get involved with the Actor's Studio?

I won a scholarship to the American Academy of Dramatic Art, but I realized I need more training. Kazan was collapsing these distinctions between technical accomplishment and truthful acting. For him, good technique was simply a process of getting to the truth – if the technique wasn't revealing anything about yourself, it was just horseshit. I was working already, doing Shakespeare, but there was something missing. So I auditioned for Uta Hagen's class. She was teaching scene development through Chekhov, Genet –heavy hitters. She didn't accept me, but I auditioned again. And I read her book, Respect for Acting, and learnt stuff I still use all the time – stuff all the method guys use – though the 'method' has now just become a vacuous name for moody

bullshit. Kazan and Hagen weren't about that. With them, you worked. You didn't sit listening to them droning on. You did the scene, they took it apart in a critical, constructive way, and you went home, repaired it, and brought it back. And home was Manhattan, on the Upper West Side. I was doing the Scottish play with Christopher Walken, Christopher Lloyd, John Hurt – great guys who became my friends. And I'm reading Hagen's book, and learning that the thrust of a scene is built upon what you are physically doing – what Harold Clurman and Lee Strasberg were calling 'physical life'. This approach junked the traditional way of classifying things on stage as 'props' and 'business', as if they were somehow adjuncts to the acting itself, or the story. With Hagen, we all worked endlessly on moving through spaces and using stuff. To illustrate the insight with an old cliché: notice how intensely you are washing the dishes when you don't want to have that argument with your wife. You bury yourself away in some physical activity. You're ducking something, avoiding conflict. Rarely are you standing around saying, “No, darling, blah, blah blah,” waiting for a kind of static, close-up moment when you finally crescendo with: “I'm really going to fucking kill you right now if you say that again.” The work on physical life helps you get it out differently. Then the immediacy and vibrancy comes through. That's what Uta wanted to see when I auditioned again.

But at the time, was there any sense in which people thought a single, new orthodoxy – ‘the’ method- was emerging?

Not at all. There is no single orthodoxy. Some people work outside in, start with the costumes or the room; others go the other way. What Uta Hagen always stressed was the danger of intellectualizing when it's time to play the music. Same in jazz. Miles Davis would hear all these genius guys come up after him and he'd say, “All I'm hearing is the

scales.” It don't swing. Virtuosity is great, but you gotta constantly ask: does it get you? So in acting: sure, you prep real deep; but don't bring that stuff on stage with you. It'll just get in the way of the music.

Christopher Walken also talks about the jazz rhythm in acting. But how do you know if your music's got the right pitch, or tone, or rhythm?

When you don't know what it is you're doing! A genius actor forgets the prep, gets lost in the scene and just plays the jazz. My flaw is still that I get caught in my head too much. I just asked J. J. Abrams to shoot me last to get the best of me. Shoot me first, and I'll still be in my head about it until it starts to click. With Robert Downey Jr. you don't do that. You get him right away. He did his first film with me (Apted's Firstborn) He's got so much, right off the top, all leaking out. He's like a volcano. A director needs to know that. As Robert Duvall says, a director who's not listening to the actor is only using half the actor.

What excited you back then?

Brando – mesmerizing, obviously – and some Brits. Richard Burton doing Alexander the Great –phenomenal stuff. He's gonna leap out and kill you any moment. I haven't seen danger like that on the screen for ages. There's De Niro in Taxi Driver: a symphony of stuff comes out of him there – deep preparation, and then the jazz. Pure Coltrane.

Is it rare because it's somehow risky descending to that degree of characterization?

Kazan used to say that not all actors can play all parts. We have limits to what we can access, and when. When I was doing Naked Lunch, I was really in the middle of a dark wood. I'd broken up with someone I thought I was gonna marry. I was floundering emotionally. The book had been

...AND I SUDDENLY GET IT: I'M NOT GOING TO BE MILES DAVIS. AT THAT POINT THERE WAS A LITTLE BIT OF DESPERATION.”



PETER WELLER. PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDI FLOWAY



STEVE MARTIN, PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOBBY KLEIN

BOBBY KLEIN

"no matter what your beliefs are or were, they are about to change"

the i Ching

text | SILVIA MELLA



JIM MORRISON, PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOBBY KLEIN

BOBBY KLEIN IS A LEGENDARY PHOTOGRAPHER OF LA COUNTER-CULTURE AS HE HAS PURVEYED SOME OF THE MOST ICONIC IMAGES IN ROCK HISTORY IN THE 60'S AND 70'S. HE IS ONE OF THE MOST GENUINELY FASCINATING PEOPLE ONE COULD HOPE TO COME ACROSS; ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE THAT SEEM TO KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU AT FIRST SIGHT. BOBBY LIVES IN TULUM, MEXICO, WHERE I MET HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME ONE MORNING IN JUNE AS HE WAS OBSERVING THE OCEAN. I ASKED HIM TO CAST HIS MIND BACK.

interview
BOBBY KLEIN

m e t a m O R L A N p h o s i s

the art of self-hybridization.





WE ARE CORPS MUTANTS, CHANGING BODIES

text | GIULIA SISSA

A woman, a man: once upon a time, we knew who they were. We all remember Jean-Louis Trintignant slithering and sliding on the icy road, in his Ford Mustang, in Claude Lelouch's classic film, *Un homme et une femme*, A man and a woman. He was the Man, moving fast toward the Woman. What else? That was also the time when, at the end of Jean-Luc Godard's, *Une femme est une femme*, A woman is a woman, Anna Karina could claim : "I am a woman!". No qualms. Everyone knew what it meant. It was the Sixties.

Now things are much more nuanced. The social emancipation of women and a slow transformation of masculinity have brought about a re-mapping of gender, a redistribution of roles and a reinvention of how we perform our erotic identities. We share careers and ambitions, we exchange gestures and garments. We redesign the fine lines of what is "for women" and "for men". We play with the changing signs of sensuality and manliness. Close to a bottle of Chanel No. 5, Brad Pitt's bearded face has created a stir, because the ad was supposed to convey "the perspective of a man on the most feminine fragrance of all times", but it actually challenges our expectations on what defines femininity. Unintended questions. What if that perfume were for him? "A perfume like nothing else", Coco Chanel allegedly said when No. 5 was composed. "A woman's perfume, with the scent of a woman". For us, however, virility and roses could go together, after all.

From fashion to philosophy, we are constantly reminded that distinctions are malleable, and that we are liable to theatrical shape-shifting. Science and technology do not fix the body to its immutable nature. Quite the contrary: pharmacology, surgery, new materials and computers converge towards a metabolic and metamorphic experience of ourselves. Transformation is more and more possible, for real – in the flesh, under the skin. The body is becoming the place where construction, not essence, is happening. The body is becoming – period.

Contemporary art exposes, most audaciously, the limits of the physical as a given. Anatomy is not destiny: it is a challenge. What can we make of it – this is the question. The boundaries of gender are the first to move. We know the work of Cindy Sherman and Marina Abramovich. These artists bring the fictional act back to its original meaning, as it was understood in Classical Greece. Then the "poet", the one who "makes" (poiein means "to make") was seen, literally, as making up, in the double meaning of fabricating something, and adorning oneself. The composition of poetry was the re-enactment of different characters through mimicry, and chameleonic self-transformation. Poetry was the visual and resounding performance of a transformer,

who would change fluidly from male to female, from one voice to another, from one emotion to another. Since such alterations could never be complete, the artist was a hybrid, always in transit, always in between. The actor in drag, wearing a mask and playing the most different parts was the incarnation of creativity. Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga are Greeks. The ancients invented post-modernity. However there is an artist who, more intrepidly and pointedly (and I could add "surgically") than anyone else, has never ceased to explore the mimetic resources of the body. It is ORLAN. Born in France, living in Paris, but moving incessantly across the planet, from an exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in Paris or at MOCA in L.A., to a performance at the Biennale in Venice, ORLAN pioneers an open-ended research for what is happening, now and everywhere, to our identities. And whenever/wherever she finds something new that helps dislodge conventional wisdom and lazy connections, she brings that into light – as an artist. This means that she makes it visible, magnified, and different. She does so in overwrought materials, glaring colors, automated montages, and inflatable objects. All of that comes in size XXL. Most often, she does so by staging herself in images and machineries, costumes and performing acts. ORLAN's engagement with the body goes as far as plastic surgery, implants and biopsies.

Allusive, ironical, and yet generously candid, ORLAN tells the story of her intellectual and aesthetic quest. In the Eighties, to re-enact the artificial nature of beauty and the masquerade of the desirable body, ORLAN undergoes, or, to be more precise, orchestrates procedures of cosmetic surgery. She chooses the mouth she wishes to have. She decides to acquire two commas, in bas-relief, on her forehead. These are not make-believe; they are actual small bumps, inserted under the skin, and usually covered in sparkling, colorful powder. ORLAN stages the operations, in which she appears, dressed in a Harlequin's hat. As the actor, the producer and the director, much more than the patient, she has the procedure filmed and broadcast in an art gallery. This was obviously an extreme act of playfulness for a "corps rebelle", a rebel body. Take the most objectifying situation – to lie down at the hands of a surgeon, partially anesthetized, ready to be cut up and grafted, – and make it your own scene, so much so that, on the operation theater, you take care of every single detail, from the script to the costume. You, a woman, can be the victim of fashion's stereotypes and of your lovers' fantasies; and yet you, a woman, can make fun of it, and lead the game. Look at the plasticity of beauty! Look at the power of technology! But do not whine about modernity: just take the measure of it, and enjoy your own critique!

After the modifications of her features, ORLAN put her altered self to work. In what she calls her "post-operative images", she prolonged the process of self-hybridization. She tells us that she wanted « to use the image manufactured by surgery, in order to make it into something else ». She grew interested in « the intertwining, the hybridization that always connects to disorder, hospitality, and the ability to let yourself be disturbed...It was about questioning our standards of beauty, codified in a certain time, in a certain place ». We are corps mutants, changing bodies. This is how we should learn to see ourselves. Through photo-shop and computer techniques, the artist let her transitional face blend with other faces, differently shaped, sculpted or enhanced, in African or Native American societies.

Now the intent was to draw attention to the malleability not only of gender, but also of ethnic identities. Vast portraits of post-operative and post-colonial faces, in which ORLAN's mouth continues to change, thus morphing into a hugely enlarged lower lip, pierced with a wooden disk, extend fictionally the work of the scalpel. The little frontal protuberances grow into coiling horns. When we look at these hybrids, we see ourselves, with ORLAN, in an anti-narcissistic, and yet enhancing, mirror. We could be different.

Now ORLAN is taking another step in her experimental engagement with her own body. This is a different kind of procedure: staged biopsy. A recent installation shows ORLAN's cells, collected and cultivated in a gigantic bioreactor. Transparent and full of bright-red liquid, this new apparatus brings together cellular material from the tissues of the artist as well as of other living beings, non-human and human. Harlequin is still there, since the containers of the cultivated cells (kept alive for the duration of the installation) are inserted in multicolored lozenges. A fashion statement, but also a political statement, the versatile Venetian mask conveys what ORLAN mostly cares about: a loud "yes" to life, in its multi-hued mixture. Having launched a petition against death, ORLAN has made "relics of her flesh, preserved under Plexiglas".

Whereas it is so difficult to be in tune with our times, "I try to be there, in phase with the present", ORLAN says. "There is an anachronistic fear to touch at the body", she laments. In contrast, she admits to dreaming of a skin covered in computer keys, so that we could play with all sort of variations of ourselves. From this same dream, comes the avid interaction with science, but also with fashion. ORLAN has worked with stylists and perfume designers. « I have tried to consider the body as a costume », she tells us. In one performance, ORLAN walks into a room wearing a hqgab, made of forty meters of black cloth. Slowly, she tears the cloth, and delivers her eyes and then her mouth. From that mouth, she will finally begin to read a text by philosopher Michel Serres. In a spectacular installation in Nantes, tall mannequins stand elaborately dressed in Harlequin's gowns with a black back, carrying gigantic words, such as "surfemme", hyper-woman or "sensualite", sensuality. Speaking bodies.

ORLAN's impressive records of exhibitions, installations, videos, bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional artifacts, pieces of bio-art, and performances can be seen on her official website: <http://www.orlan.eu/news/>. We can also listen to a long interview, in five sessions of 27 minutes each, broadcast on France Culture, a French radio station, entirely dedicated to culture and the arts (A voix nue: ORLAN, artiste corps rebelle :<http://www.franceculture.fr/emission-a-voix-nue-orlan-artiste-corps-rebelle-15-2012-12-03>).

A journalist and art critic, Pascale Lismonde (http://www.lemonde.fr/pascale_lismonde), engages in a conversation that retraces ORLAN's project from beginning to end. It is from this interview that I have quoted ORLAN's words. The conversation culminates in an eloquent self-introduction: "Je sais que je suis un femme et une homme". The wordplay with grammatical gender ("un" is masculine; "une" is feminine) is untranslatable into English, but the meaning could be rendered as something like: "I know that I am a he-female and a she-male".

Good bye Lelouch, good bye Godard! XXXXXXXXXX

there was a strict line of communication. It isn't necessarily through many words with Michael. He can follow a shot, say one or two words, and you respond.

What kind of relationship do you have with LA?

I was fifty-fifty about the city until I had a home and my family here. But LA is extraordinary, visually. Its ethnic and cultural variety makes it look different everywhere. And the city for me is an instrument with which to light films – that's an integral element in Hollywood's history, of course. I got to explore it for *Heat*, and for *LA Confidential*.

In *LA Confidential*, did the history of the city's depiction in film, especially in the noir genre, matter?

Actually, the first rule in doing *LA Confidential* was to forget all that. Curtis Hanson asked me one night, "Dante, do you know film noir?". I was drunk in Italy at the time after a shoot, and I told him I had no idea what noir was. And Curtis said, "Great. I don't want any references to it."

But the importance of art and photography is a recurrent element in your filmmaking...

Yes. Francis Bacon came into the picture when I was working on *Blink* with Michael Apter as we were recreating the deteriorating sight of a woman (played by Madeleine Stowe). Around *Heat*, we were looking at Nan Goldin's work. During *The Insider*, we became interested in Lorca di Corcia's photography. In *LA Confidential*, Robert Frank was really the illuminator of the movie for me. I remember three exhibitions of his photography around that time. I became interested in his ability to employ a couple of devices to wipe away a pre-existing reality and impose his own vision upon a subject. I found that extraordinary. I'm often enriched by images unrelated to film. The key is to remain capable of being fascinated by new developments, provided they stay connected to some human, social dimension.

How would you wrap up your message to people hoping to emulate your level of success in the movie industry?

What matters most is a real understanding of the story. You need to dig deep into your personal life to pull out the relevant emotions, memories and fantasies, so that you can deliver an image that has a kind of truth. Having an understanding of – and liking for – human faces helps. The face is so often the way into the story. But you're invariably making split decisions moments before shooting. The preparatory work is important, but the technical side is the easy part. When I talk to film students, I concentrate on the hard part: the need to build inside themselves an aesthetic, a cultural system, that will allow them to find answers to problems on the spot. Earlier in my career, I would walk around endlessly noting the play of light here, the shadows falling there. Now I don't write so much down. But the process is still there. Mentally, if not literally. That's what I do. I take down notes.

DANTE SPINOTTI

STAYING POWER on cinematography and the continental divide

Text | PETER STACEY



IF YOU KNOW THE WORK OF CINEMATOGRAPHER DANTE SPINOTTI, CHANCES ARE THAT YOU FIRST CAME TO IT THROUGH THE FILMS OF MICHAEL MANN, WHOSE SEMINAL SERIAL-KILLER THRILLER *MANHUNTER* (1986) NOT ONLY INTRODUCED HANNIBAL LECTER TO CINEMA AUDIENCES BUT ALSO MARKED THE START OF A BRILLIANT AND ENDURING COLLABORATION WITH THE ITALIAN-BORN SPINOTTI AS HIS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY. INITIALLY ENGINEERED BY LEGENDARY ITALIAN PRODUCER DINO DE LAURENTIIS, THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SPINOTTI AND MANN LED TO SOME OF THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND VISUALLY ARRESTING MOVIES OF THE 1990s: *LAST OF THE MOHICANS* (1992) *HEAT* (1995), AND *THE INSIDER* (1999). FOR WHICH BOTH THE DIRECTOR AND HIS DP WERE NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR. THEIR MOST RECENT WORK TOGETHER – *PUBLIC ENEMIES* (2009) – SAW THEM TURNING TO DIGITAL TO CAPTURE THE CAT-AND-MOUSE STORY OF THE FBI'S HUNT FOR NOTORIOUS GANGSTER JOHN DILLINGER (PLAYED BY JOHNNY DEPP).

SPINOTTI'S ARRIVAL IN HOLLYWOOD CATAPULTED HIM INTO OTHER PROJECTS WITH EQUALLY RENOWNED HEAVYWEIGHTS: BRUCE BERESFORD (CRIMES OF THE HEART (1986), PAUL SCHRADER (COMFORT OF STRANGERS, 1990), MICHAEL APTED (BLINK AND NELL, 1994), AND BARRY LEVINSON (BANDITS, 2001). HIS WORK WITH CURTIS HANSON ON THE SPECTACULAR JAMES ELLROY ADAPTATION LA CONFIDENTIAL (1997) AGAIN PUT HIM IN CONTENTION FOR AN ACADEMY AWARD. HE REMAINS IN HIGH DEMAND, REGULARLY RECRUITED INTO SOME OF THE MOST COMMERCIAL FILMS OF RECENT YEARS: X-MEN: THE LAST STAND (2006); THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER (2010); AND TOWER HEIST (2011). AND IN 2012, HE WAS HONORED WITH THE PRESTIGIOUS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD BY THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CINEMATOGRAPHERS ON THE GROUNDS THAT "HIS VISUAL STYLE... PLAYFUL EXPERIMENTATION AND CONSUMMATE CRAFT... RESULTS IN ICONIC IMAGERY. HE IS A MODEL FOR WHY GREAT CINEMATOGRAPHERS ARE TRULY TIMELESS." BUT TO START THE STORY OF SPINOTTI'S SUCCESS IN HIS HOLLYWOOD YEARS IS TO START THE STORY HALF-WAY THROUGH. PART OF THE EXPLANATION FOR HIS CONTINUING SUCCESS OVER THREE DECADES LIES IN UNDERSTANDING HIS EUROPEAN BACKGROUND AND HIS EARLY CAREER IN ITALIAN TV AND FILM. HE INVITED IDOLIZE TO HIS SANTA MONICA HOME TO DIG A LITTLE DEEPER...

Dante, you were born in 1943 in north-eastern Italy in the Friuli region, not far from Udine. What early experiences proved formative for your career?

I don't like to call it a career, really, which suggests a pre-planned sequence of events. In truth, much of my professional trajectory has been up to chance. But I can certainly talk of the start of my working life. Early on, I had a couple of talents that helped. First, while my other grades at school were pretty low, I was very good at drawing – I could render geometric shapes and still-life studies better than anyone else. I could compose, and capture light and shade. The other thing was a love of mechanics. I have always loved cameras as mechanical objects. The combination of these two aspects was useful - in movie-making you need that combination to give you technical control, so that you can then dedicate yourself to the construction of a language.

My parents wanted me to have a traditional education and a conventional career. But I wasn't up to it. So what do you do with a teenage like this? I had an uncle who was in Kenya at the time - a cinematographer – so I was sent to work for him. It was a turbulent time in Kenya: the Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule in the 1950s, then independence in 1963. I was full of ideas and enthusiasm, although I didn't perhaps show enough appreciation of my uncle back then. You only learn how to be appreciative with age. We argued, and I went back to Italy. My parents were pretty despairing. But I had this letter of recommendation from the Scottish company manager back in Kenya, which I waved around. That helped. Besides, I was immensely driven by this passion for images. And I had learnt English, too. That was very rare in those days for a young Italian, and a huge advantage later.

So how did your talents find an outlet?

We lived in the province of Rovigo, not far from Venice, I'm still very connected to that world, actually. I photographed the local soccer club, displayed my work in the town's bar. Photography fascinated me. I had a darkroom, but before that I used to process negatives under the bed, with the windows blacked out! Home was a stimulating environ-

ment. My mother was a pianist and teacher, and there were artists and writers around.

Through those connections, I wound up in Milan, working for the 22 Dicembre group, an important production company then. Because of my English, I was made assistant cameraman on commercials for British companies. I got to work with David Watkin, the legendary cinematographer and Oscar winner (for Out of Africa). He was a really nice, generous guy – and phenomenally creative. His experiments in lighting revolutionized everything. He invented the 'Wendy' rig (a grid of lights on a gantry suspended in the air - now the standard technique for lighting exterior night-time scenes). Watching him work was unbelievably seminal.

It was a crucial phase. I was doing well, directing commercials. But the precariousness as a freelancer bothered me. My father had had ups and downs in business. And I was now married with two kids. I wanted more security. So I won a job in Rai, the Italian state television company. There, technical standards were not that high, but I had the space to do anything, from documentaries to films - a real freedom to experiment. That was the culture. Nobody could fire me. I was privileged to be able to make mistakes without worrying about the next job. I was essentially self-taught as a cameraman.

Were those the glory days of European public broadcasting?

Yes. I remember vividly the BBC's Battle of Culloden (1964), made by Peter Watkins – all that hand-held camerawork he pioneered was so groundbreaking. You see its influence everywhere now.

Then came Ken Loach's Kathy Come Home (1966) and the BBC's Play for Today drama slot from 1970 onwards, which commissioned work from the most creative people in modern British film – writers like John Osborne, Dennis Potter, Stephen Poliakoff, David Hare, and Alan Bleasdale; directors like Stephen Frears, Alan Clarke, Michael Apted, Mike Newell, Lindsay Anderson, Mike Leigh. It was a bold, experimental space. But Rai was falling behind in produc-

tion values; it wasn't managed well, to put it mildly. In the end, I decided to go freelance again. Rai was attracting great directors, like Elio Petri and Marco Ferreri. These two checked me out, and I began to get offers of work.

You then moved into independent film-making, working with Sergio Citti (Il Minestrone, 1981) Lina Wertmüller (Sotto... sotto, 1984), Liliana Cavani (director of The Night Porter) on The Berlin Affair (1985), as well as Ermanno Olmi (The Legend of the Holy Drinker, 1988). Here you were immersed in leftist, avant-garde subjects: the political heritage of fascism and Nazism, transgressive relationships, and so on. Did 1968 politicize you?

Yes. Unfortunately, I had just missed that amazing season of Italian cinema (Fellini, Visconti, etc.). Nevertheless, '68 marked me. The politics played out badly in Rai. But the film world was really interesting. I made my first 35mm film for Citti in Rome, at the Cinecittà studios – Il Minestrone (1981) – with Roberto Benigni in the lead. Another crucial step.

When you moved to LA for Manhunter, what did you have to offer Hollywood?

It was a huge move. In Italy, there was a kind of independence from the audiences, to the point of actually not caring much about them. The film language was heavily experimental and the connection with the public not that tight. That's why Italians almost always had difficulties selling films to America. Italy lacked good producers to rein in screenplays and directors – it was all auteur-driven. In the States, I found myself in films with massive budgets, huge amounts of control and verticality on set, expensive actors, and virtually no room for mistakes. The cultural base of the operation here is the connection with the public. And it's driven by concerns about efficiency. Far more time goes into preparation.

What we European cinematographers – not only me but people like Vittorio Storaro (Bertolucci's favoured DP, who won Oscars for Apocalypse Now and Reds) - brought to the table was, paradoxically, that improvisational ability which the lack of exactness in our experimental years had encouraged. And we'd worked in a very rich cultural setting. That European background helped: we were interested in a lot of different stuff.

Did you and Mann click at once?

That's an interesting story. Michael always has a very strong vision of how his movie is going to look. That drives him through the process. With him, you either play the game or not. I found his approach fascinating, intellectually and emotionally. That helped cement the relationship. It was the

kind of filmmaking that I had dreamt could exist, but had not yet seen. I was prepared to run with his method even when it seemed illogical, because I was so interested in learning. Michael embodies for me an idea which Umberto Eco expresses in The Absent Structure: you can only define something as art if the instruments of communication you use are changing. There must be formal innovation for it to count as art. When someone makes a step forward, there's no coming back, the rules change forever. Bertolucci did that; Michael does that, too. All his movies push the envelope in technical ways. And I could make a contribution. He had seen my work, and was very enthusiastic. He liked the way I drew and used lighting and colour.

One of Manhunter's most striking characteristics is a distinctive palette to capture the internal, mental states of its protagonists (the subject of a documentary called The Manhunter Look, an extra on the DVD). That suggests a highly concentrated approach to the technical and the emotional aspects of the film.

Michael is one of the very few guys who takes film-making to a scientific level. He writes a million notes for everybody. On Manhunter, we worked incredibly long days, moved around from Chicago to Atlanta to Robert Rauschenberg's beach house (the ultra-modernist residence of the late American artist in Captiva, Florida, used as the location for a love scene between the detective Will, played by William Petersen - and his wife, played by Kim Griest). In Thief, Michael had already used green and black to create an unsettling, eerie atmosphere. When we met, he showed me a Magritte painting - The Empire of Light - of a house mysteriously lit by a single street lamp. That helped convey the mood he wanted. I suggested we go blue to characterize the romantic relationship between the troubled cop and his wife in the love scene. I did some tests in the Rauschenberg house. It was complicated. We used six different kinds of blue gel to cover the windows (the nocturnal scene was shot in daylight, the gel acting to transform the sunlight playing on the ocean outside into an almost hallucinogenic, blue moonlight that bathes the interior.)

Did that involve lots of research into new materials?

Yes, but that's the easy part. The hard bit in these innovations is always coming up with the initial idea. Once you have the intuition about how to tell a story in a new way, the rest falls into place.

What about the structure of the shots and scenes in your work with Mann?

That's all Michael. He does the framing. Take The Last of the Mohicans. I was operating the camera throughout, but



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